



COMMON GROUND PROJECT (AUSPICED BY DIVERSITAT)

“STAYING GROUNDED”

ORGANISATION OVERVIEW:

Common Ground Project (CGP) is a community farm that promotes food security by creating fair access to locally grown, healthy food. "Staying Grounded" is an onsite food-security program for some of the most vulnerable people in the region. Participants develop skills in the hospitality and agricultural sectors, while supplying emergency food relief to those in need, helping build strong, resilient, healthy communities. "Staying Grounded" also offers training and assistance in food production to members of the Diversitat community. This initiative enables direct access to nutrient rich food, pathways to further training and potential employment opportunities and greater social connection within the community and improved mental health.

The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage found that communities in the G21 region are among Victoria's most disadvantaged, including a higher than average unemployment rate compared with other Victorians (<http://www.g21.com.au/addressing-disadvantage>). This data was captured prior to the event of COVID-19, which suggests these figures have increased, along with subsequent effects on individual mental health, impacting the relative level of social and economic wellbeing of the region. "Staying Grounded" has been developed in response to this reality - with a view to address the specific and ongoing need for training and employment opportunities for asylum seekers who are most vulnerable within the region. This approach is motivated by significant evidence; the best way to reduce persistent disadvantage in a community is to reduce unemployment rates in those areas.

HOW THE GRANT FUNDS WILL BE USED:

Salaries – 50% of the salary for their Farm Manager and Community Events Manager

Staying Grounded is a food-security program for some of the most vulnerable people in the region. Participants develop skills in the hospitality and agricultural sectors, while supplying emergency food relief to those in need, with the aim to help build strong, healthy, resilient communities. Over the past 18 months through our Staying Grounded program, CGP has provided: 12 women from asylum seeker background 1,700 hours of paid work preparing meals and growing produce; helping to prepare over 7,000 food relief meals; grow and distribute 1,200 kilos of fresh vegetables grown onsite for people facing disadvantage. We have also recently done an "Afghan Feast", selling 60 meals to supporters in the community for \$75 per meal, paying the women to prepare the meals and helping to raise awareness and funds for these women and their families. Increased awareness of the program has also resulted in the participants catering for private events. Funding for the wages of Greta and Ivan will allow us to increase the number of meals prepared as well as provide catering and onsite events where the women will be paid to prepare food.

Note: This application is being auspiced by Diversitat as Common Ground does not have deductible gift recipient tax status.